History of St. Casimir Church.
Diamond Jubilee 1914-1989 St. Casimir Church, Erie, PA.
CAP at Orchard Lake.

1989 marks the 75th anniversary of St. Casimir's Parish and the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. In 1914 Poles lacked most rights in their homeland, which existed in their hearts, not on the political map of Europe. For more than 100 years Poland was divided among Russia, Prussia and Germany. Seeking a better life, many Poles emigrated to America in the early 20th Century. They brought their dearest possessions: their language, culture and Catholic Faith.

By 1914 a large number of Polish emigrants settled in Erie's lower Eastside, drawn by work opportunities especially at Hammermill and General Electric. Under the leadership of a social club, the "Huzary", the people organized to request their own parish. Most Reverend John E. Fitzmaurice, Bishop of Erie, acquiesced, establishing the parish under the heavenly patronage of St. Casimir, a Polish prince renowned for generosity to the poor. The founding Pastor was Fr. John Dembinski, himself a native of Poland.

To preserve their traditions and adapt to their new homeland, the parishioners sacrificed to build their church and establish a grade school in its basement. For this educational task, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, a Polish order with a Motherhouse in Pittsburgh, labored more than 60 years to form the future generations of parishioners as good Catholics and citizens. With time and effort the people of St. Casimir's built a school and convent. Parish life thrived with the activities of such societies as: Third Order of St. Francis, Junior and Senior Sodalities, Holy Rosary Society, Perpetual Help Society, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, St. Bernadette Society, Holy Name Society, the "Bractwa" of St. Casimir and of St. Cecilia, the Mothers Club, etc.

The heyday of the parish came with the "Baby Boom" after World War II. Since then many members moved to the suburbs or away from Erie. Sad were the days when the Sisters left and the school closed. Presently the parish organizations are: Rosary Society, Ladies Guild, Holy Name Society, Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors, Ushers, St. Bernadette Society and Senior Citizens Group.

Due to political and historical reasons, there was no steady or large influx of Polish settlers to the United States since the 1920s. Though the Polish language is not preserved to the third generation, Polish customs such as Christmas Wigilia and Koledy, and Easter Swieconka, live on. Recent immigrants, trips to Poland, and various fundraising events maintain a certain Solidarity between our parishioners and our roots and heritage. Most importantly, the Catholic Faith which was planted in Polish hearts 1,000 years ago continues to be passed on at St. Casimir’s.
Interest in Poland and things Polish has not closed the minds and hearts of St. Casimir’s people to the rest of the world. Evidence of this Catholic and catholic spirit is seen in the three dozen native sons and daughters who have served as brothers, sisters, and priests throughout the United States, and in Europe, Africa, South America, Asia and Australia.

ST. CASIMIR CHURCH

1914 - Church property donated by Congressman M.M. Liebel, Jr. Representative of Erie/Crawford District at that time. Congregation (150 families) bought additional 350 ft. of adjoining property through contributions.

1914 - Cornerstone laid on November 15 Huzar Club actively involved in functions of the church.

1915 - Construction of the church began in the Spring of 1915 by Liebel-Binney Construction Co. at a cost of $30,000. Money raised by various church organizations who sold chances and held dances to pay off the debt.

St. Cecelia, St. Casimir and the Rosary Societies organized.

1916 - Church dedicated formally March 5 by Rt. Rev. John E. Fitzmaurice, (acting Bishop). Rev. John Dembinski was named first Pastor. Choir formed under the direction of Miss Francelia Daub.

1918 - Rectory acquired at 629 Hess Avenue.

Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth began teaching in Church basement.

1920 - Sisters Convent at 637 Hess Avenue obtained for Sister of the Holy Family of Nazareth, Pittsburgh, PA (about 425 children attended school at that time).

1922 - Blessed Mother Sodality organized.

1928 - Perpetual Help Society organized.

1930 - Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi organized.

1931 - Father Dembinski dies.


1941 - Holy Name Society for men organized.

1942 - Rev. Stephen Dobosiewicz ordained and assigned to St. Casimir as the first Assistant Pastor.

1948 - Groundbreaking for St. Casimir School held in February. Cost of school $185,000.

1950 - Mother's Club organized.

1954 - Rev. Stephen Długolecki elevated to the rank of Very Rev. Msgr. by Pope Pius XII.

1955 - New convent at 660 Hess Avenue built at cost of $73,500.


1965 - Father Joseph Gregorek became a Resident at St. Casimir.
1966 - Millenium Ball celebrating 1000 years of Polish Christianity observed on December 31st in school auditorium with Msgr. Stephen Długolecki presiding. Father Richard Guzowski became Assistant Pastor at St. Casimir.


1973 - Girl Scouts organized by Mrs. Anna Mae Murzynski, Scout Leader.


1982 - Spirit of Christ School closes.


1984 - Krakow Festival held on school grounds. School occupied by Dr. Gertrude A. Barber Center.

1985 - Ramp for Handicapped constructed.

1986 - School occupied by Heritage Christian Academy.

1987 - Father Nowakowski dies. Rev. Daniel Kresinski appointed Pastor on December 9th.


ST. CASIMIR'S NATIVE PRIESTS

FR. LEON DOBOSIEWICZ
FR. STEPHEN DOBROSIEWICZ
FR. J. DANIEL DYMSKI
FR. RICHARD GUZOWSKI
FR. DAVID MACIUKIEWICZ
FR. WALTER OSTROWSKI, SVD
FR. LEONARD MROczKOWSKI
FR. JOSEPH MROczKOWSKI
FR. DANIEL PREZ
FR. LEO RAFALOWSKI
FR. JOSEPH WARDANSKI
FR. EDWARD MATUSZAK
FR. STANISLAUS WIDOMSKI
FR. BENJAMIN CYWINSKI
FR. CASIMIR LUBIAK
FR. CASIMIR MURAWSKI
FR. JOSEPH WITKOWSKI

ST. CASIMIR'S NATIVE SISTERS

THE HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH

SR. M. ADRIANNE PELKOWSKI
SR. M. ALOYSIUS PELKOWSKI
SR. M. CECILIA CIUZYCKI
SR. M. ALICE LUBIAK
SR. M. MERCEDES ZELCZAK
SR. M. ANECE GODLEWSKI
SR. M. SUSAN PIECHOCKI
SR. CATHERINE ANN PIECHOCKI
SR. M. NORBERTA LIJEWSKI

SISTERS OF SAINT JOSEPH SSJ
SR. M. AGNES CLARE KREPCHO

SISTER OF MERCY RSN
SR. PIERRE DEMBIŃSKI

SISTERS OF HOLY SPIRIT
SR. S.M. ASSUMPTA

FELICIAN SISTERS CSSF
SR. M. LAURETTA LEPKOWSKI
SR. M. LYDIA GAWLIŃSKI
SR. M. EDITH GAWLIŃSKI